

EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGMENT PROGRAMS IN EMERGENCY SERVICES

EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

In March of 1998 the City of Clearwater, Florida, appointed a new Fire Chief. Of primary concern to the new administration was the atmosphere of distrust between labor and management. This problem was counterproductive to the success of the organization and the resulting poor morale was widespread. The problem that prompted this research project was that the Department had no meaningful program to acknowledge the extraordinary accomplishments of its personnel, either in the workplace or in the community.

The purpose of this research project was to study the factors that motivate employees in today's workplace and to design a program that acknowledges and even motivates personnel in their efforts to contribute to the overall success of the organization. The action research method was used. The following research questions were posed:

1. How does the lack of an employee recognition program affect employees and organizations?
2. Are there any unanticipated benefits awaiting organizations that implement an employee recognition program?
3. What types of programs work best in emergency services organizations?
4. What resources are required for successful programs?

The literature review examined the current discussions on employee motivation and the variety of programs utilized by organizations considered successful by both their

customers and their employees. Not surprising was the limited information available in the public sector. The results indicated that employees are not motivated by money, nor will they respond to the antiquated theory of “hard-line” management practices. Public safety organizations that evolve to meet the needs of the changing community must also develop the management practices necessary to meet the needs of their personnel.

Changes in the fire service should be viewed as evolutionary and not revolutionary. It was recommended that managers today recognize the implications of change **within** their organizations and develop programs that address these needs through efforts that enhance communications and employee relations.

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INTRODUCTION

On October 1, 1997, the City of Clearwater, Florida, began its seventh consecutive budget year without a millage increase to taxpayers. This was consistent with a two-part philosophy that:

- believed there was significant waste in local government and an increase in operating costs, such as employee wage adjustments, could be absorbed by a more efficiently-run organization and;
- that the taxpayer approved of and supported a lean but well-run government as long as there wasn't any negative impact on services.

In support of this philosophy was an organizational culture at the senior management level that encouraged and even rewarded department managers who "under-spent" their budgets. As a result, there was little or no planning for the future and at best the resources available were directed at maintaining services at the status quo level.

In retrospect, it appears that an attempt to maintain services in an atmosphere of increased operating costs could only have been funded by reallocating resources for infrastructure needs and/or personnel costs. It is this author's belief that a lack of planning, coupled with several years of "doing more with less," have depleted the organization's ability to provide the necessary programs and support that allow for high levels of employee morale.

The problem that prompted this research project was that Clearwater Fire and

Rescue did not have a meaningful program in place to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions of its employees, either in the workplace or in the community. There was considerable frustration among line personnel stemming from a belief that the Department's administration did not respect their needs or ideas for improving services or working conditions. As a result, the years of service awards and annual recognition of Firefighter and Paramedic of the Year programs were meaningless and subsequently of little value to the organization and its personnel.

The purpose of this research was to develop a meaningful recognition program for all Department personnel that acknowledged their contributions to the community. The action research method was used. The following research questions were posed:

1. How does the lack of an employee recognition program affect employees and organizations?
2. Are there any unanticipated benefits awaiting organizations that implement an employee recognition program?
3. What types of programs work best in emergency services organizations?
4. What resources are required for successful programs?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Because the fire service is considered a paramilitary organization, the traditional hierarchy and hard-line management style have been more or less successful in the past. As the fire service continues to evolve and respond to the changing needs of the

community, so should the management practices that support and motivate employees.

In the past, a “years of service” award consisted of a pin that could be worn by personnel as testimony to their longevity with the organization. This was changed in recent years to more expensive awards, such as plaques and desk clocks, which are less appreciated because fire department employees never were asked or had the opportunity to provide input as the program was being revised.

Current programs include separate selections for Firefighter and Paramedic of the Year, based on nominations from mid-level managers. The nomination criteria includes “off-duty” accomplishments, which is ironic because of the limited support provided by the organization towards these efforts. These programs are of limited value and are considered “your turn” awards by the personnel. The Firefighter of the Year program may have been forced on the Department in the past as a result of frequent requests from local service groups to honor our designee. The Paramedic of the Year program is funded by a fifty-year trust established by a grateful citizen in the community as a result of lifesaving efforts on his behalf and not by the Department.

The success of any organization today is at least partially dependent on addressing the issues of employee support and morale. Today’s employees are not motivated by money. If they were, they would not be volunteering or working in the field of emergency services, most as public sector employees. Successful managers today need only engage their employees in conversation and show honest appreciation for a job well done. Without

effective communication between labor and management, the organization is doomed to mediocrity. A recent consultant study of the Department remarked that most service-oriented organizations could determine the need for new programs just by asking their personnel out in the field. Both labor and management have an obligation to conduct meaningful dialogue with each other and labor should never feel obligated to discuss only non-controversial issues. Without this dialogue, it is not just the organization that suffers, but also the community served.

City of Clearwater

Originally an agricultural and fishing village, the City of Clearwater, Florida, has grown rapidly both as a tourist destination and as a business center. Clearwater is located on the central west coast of Florida and is one of the largest cities in the rapidly expanding Tampa Bay area. It is the county seat of Pinellas County, widely regarded as one of the Southeast's most industrialized counties, focusing on clean, light industry in a semi-tropical environment.

On May 27, 1915, the City of Clearwater was incorporated. The City has a commission/city manager form of government. Over 1600 employees, part-time and full-time, are employed by the City. (City of Clearwater. Office of Management and Budget, 1998, p.3)

Clearwater Fire and Rescue

The Clearwater Fire and Rescue Department was founded in 1911. The Department responds to approximately 20,000 calls per year and provides fire protection, fire prevention, emergency medical rescue, emergency management and public education services. The assigned fire protection district is about 42.5 square miles in area and serves a permanent population of 105,000. The Department has six stations strategically located to provide three-to-five minute responses to incidents. The total staff under the Fire Chief's supervision is 170 and includes a fiscal year budget of approximately 11 million dollars. (City of Clearwater. Office of Management and Budget, 1998, p.3)

This research brief was completed in accordance with the applied research guidelines of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. The issue addressed by the research relates specifically to Unit 7 of the *Executive Development* course, titled "Organizational Culture." This unit addresses the change necessary to the prevailing organizational culture as the mission of the fire service evolves to meet the needs of the community. The problems inherent with change are especially significant to the fire service because of long-standing tradition. This research is completed with the hope of facilitating the transition of change.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review began with a comprehensive review of information that focused on issues affecting employee morale. Not surprising was the limited information available on motivating employees engaged in the public sector and specifically those employees engaged in the provision of emergency services. The reality is that although the framework of organizational needs and the employees who work within it has become more complex, the fundamentals of employee motivation are consistent.

Bob Nelson, in an article titled *Energizing Your Employees*, concluded that the traditional methods of motivating employees – either with carrots (promotions or cash) or with sticks (intimidation or firing) – are no longer effective in the work place. He goes on to affirm that today's successful organizations need to find innovative ways to involve employees in the workplace. (Nelson, 1998, p.1) In order to be productive, every organization needs to get extraordinary performance even from ordinary employees. (Boyle, 1997) It is more important than ever to be creative in tapping the potential energy of employees from all levels of the organization. Instead of using the power of their positions to motivate workers, managers must use the power of their ideas to inspire today's employees to be their best. Instead of using threats and intimidation to get things done, managers must create environments that support their employees and allow creativity to flourish.

“All poor morale scenarios revolve around loss of control from the workers,” cites Sara Snyder. Pro-active communications can help prevent morale problems, but once manifested, such problems should be dealt with before employees feel their power declining, a dynamic that can lead to severe outcomes. “That is why the leadership should set the communication tone,” says Diana Pelfrey, a public relations and marketing consultant. “In doing so, employers must also be willing to really listen,” she said, “not just to listen while waiting for their turn to respond.” (Snyder, 1996 p.4) The key to it all is dialogue, to openly sit with an individual or a group. You might get some wonderful surprises that could identify some misunderstandings, provide clarifications, and ultimately lead to resolutions.

The keys to job satisfaction and job motivation are appreciation and value. In the essay entitled “Work, Labor, and Play,” by W. H. Auden, is a discussion about the importance of value and appreciation. “He cannot be really happy if he is compelled by society to do what he does not enjoy doing, or if what he enjoys doing is ignored by society as of no value or importance.” The key to dealing with the problem of poor morale in the work place is to improve the participation of workers in management discussions and to increase the communication throughout the work force. (Carlos, 1997, p.3)

A study of Fortune 1,000 companies, titled “Employee Involvement and Firm Performance,” examined the value of employee involvement through such management practices as empowering, sharing, technical and social training, and the free flow of information throughout an organization. The conclusions generally supported the

relationship between high employee involvement and higher productivity. (Holmes, 1997, p.8)

In 1996 the O.C. Tanner Recognition Company commissioned an independent research firm to conduct a survey to answer the question, “Is there real value in recognition programs based on employees’ years of service?” Among the findings:

- Service recognition programs, once viewed by many as a reward for seniority, are now being used as a tool to show support for employees and enhance their attitudes toward the company.
- This new approach, using the service anniversary as a regular opportunity to reinforce performance and contribution values, means that in today’s working climate, employee award programs remain a significant priority.
- There seems to be a growing perception among managers that tomorrow’s success will only be possible if organizations create and keep a motivated workforce. (Kimball, 1997, p.21)

In a recent survey of more than one million employees, the Gallup organization identified several indicators that link employee satisfaction with positive organizational outcomes. To follow up on that research, the Carlson Marketing Group of Minneapolis commissioned Gallup earlier this year to identify how organizations can foster the

employee satisfaction indicators found in the initial study. The results showed that organizations that combine employee recognition with structured performance measurements are most likely to have engaged, satisfied employees. For example, employees who are extremely satisfied at their job are four times more likely to both have a formal measurement process in place and receive regular recognition, as compared to those who are not satisfied. Additionally, 82% of all employees surveyed agreed that recognition motivates them to improve job performance. (Gallup and Carlson, 1998)

There is a common denominator among successful organizations in recent years: employee empowerment. By installing a series of highly-effective and employee-friendly work practices, many organizations have been able to hire and retain valuable employees. Jobs are not only about productivity but also involve loyalty to the organization for the employee. Ideally, there should be workplace relationships and opportunities for personal growth as well as a feeling of job security and two-way caring. (Sunrise Consulting, 1998, p.2) If an organization neglects the human side of the workplace equation, the neglected employees will find a way to assert their humanity—usually in ways that don't contribute to the organization's success. Booker T. Washington once said, "You can't hold a man down without staying down with him." (Affinity Communications, 1996, p.8)

Frequently, we hear managers say that if you pay enough money the good employees will come and stay. This is a myth. In reality, employees are motivated by and satisfied with a whole range of non-monetary rewards that can be provided at little or no cost. These rewards can be just about anything—both tangible and intangible—as long as

you're sure it's something they would like to receive.

Examples of tangible non-monetary rewards include: leave time, early dismissal, extra vacation time, longer lunch hours, a better parking space, and other similar acknowledgments. Intangible rewards include: teaming the employee with the person he or she would like to work closely with, offering the most exciting or challenging work assignments, giving more responsibility, allowing more flexibility in work schedules, and providing more training in new or interesting skills or technologies.

It is a good idea to praise anything and everything that approaches your vision of how you want the workplace and team to operate. The general rule is that you will get more of whatever you praise, so use your praise like a compass to guide your entire team toward implementing the systems, methods, procedures, and behaviors that you desire. (Affinity Communications, 1996, p.48)

People have to succeed as human beings before they can succeed as employees. This thought is probably best captured in the following poem by Bessie Anderson Stanley:

THAT MAN IS A SUCCESS

*Who has lived well,
laughed often and loved much;*

*Who has gained the respect
of intelligent men and the love of children;*

*Who has filled his niche
and accomplished his task;*

*Who leaves the world better than he found it,
whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem or a rescued soul;*

*Who never lacked appreciation
of earth's beauty or failed to express it;*

*Who looked for the best in others
and gave the best he had.*

(Miller, 1993, p. 195)

PROCEDURES

The procedure used in preparing this research brief began with an extensive literature review at the Learning Resource Center at the National Emergency Training Center in June of 1998. Additional literature reviews were conducted at the City of Clearwater Public Library in Clearwater, and the Saint Petersburg Junior College Library, also in Clearwater, and were completed by September of 1998. The review of available literature from these sources included books, magazines, newspapers, and available applied research projects. The author also conducted a search for available information on the Internet over a period of time during the months of September and October of 1998.

Assumptions

The procedures used to complete the research project include an assumption that the literature reviewed had a practical application to fire and emergency services. The nature of fire and emergency services work is labor intensive and usually requires a team of emergency services personnel to accomplish an objective. It is assumed that the “intangibles” of employee motivation are consistent whether the employee works individually or in a group setting.

Limitations

There was not a significant amount of literature available for review from the public sector on employee recognition programs or morale. That body of information is further limited when it is applied to emergency services employees. There was, however, a large body of material for review as a result of private sector applications. The review of this material revealed that the fundamental elements of any successful program address the basic intrinsic factors of motivation inherent in all persons. It should be noted that the motivation in the private sector for providing an employee motivation/recognition program may, at least in part, be to increase productivity that potentially improves profits. It should also be noted that there is no evidence that the lack of a profit motive is the justification for the limited number of this type of program among emergency services employers in the public sector.

RESULTS

1. How does the lack of an employee recognition program affect employees and organizations?

Bob Nelson, in his book “1001 Ways To Reward Employees,” cites a survey by the Council of Communications Management that confirms what almost every employee already knows: recognition for a job well done is the top motivator of employee performance. The survey goes on to say that approximately a third of the managers reported that they themselves would rather work in an organization where they received better recognition, yet many of them don’t understand or use the potential benefits of employee recognition or rewards. (Nelson, 1994 pp. 3-18)

Recently-conducted employer/employee relationship studies (Sunrise Consulting, 1998) have been conducted, and the results were not good for employers:

- Only 25 percent of employees work at full capability.
- About 44 percent of employees exert only minimum effort.
- However, 88 percent of employees feel it is important to do their best.
- Only 9 percent of employees see a correlation between organizational success and a reward for them.
- Only about 40 percent of large organizations offer meaningful incentive programs.
- An amazing 89 percent of employees think their organizations, as a whole, would perform better if employees were given meaningful incentives to improve quality and productivity.

Employers pay salaries and employees perform a task. In most cases they perform near the status quo level. During the past decade both employer and employee loyalty have dropped dramatically, and with it came a decline in employee job interest and job quality. Employees are not performing at their highest potential because they do not feel they have any impact on organizational success and, even if they did, they do not feel they would receive any reward for improved performance. (Boyle, 1997 p.2) An employee's salary doesn't always convey both job satisfaction and job motivation. Every employee has different needs and goals which must be met by the organization in order to have a satisfied employee.

2. Are there any unanticipated benefits awaiting organizations that implement successful employee acknowledgment programs?

Every person wants to be recognized. Organizations that offer their employees incentive and recognition programs enjoy the indirect rewards of higher employee loyalty, morale, energy, commitment, cooperation, and productivity. (Boosting Employee Morale, 1996) These rewards come in addition to meeting the objectives of the programs that are implemented. In other words, you can increase organizational effectiveness and help employees receive more satisfaction from their careers.

3. What types of established programs work best in emergency services organizations?

There are no definitive programs that only work for certain types of employees. There are consistent fundamentals that should be addressed in all employee/employer relationships. Incentive and recognition programs work best when implemented as part of an overall strategy combining training, communications, research, and other key areas. Existing programs can and should be overhauled from time to time in order to remain successful. While these programs are certainly no cure-all, they do provide ways to motivate the troops and get them to focus on specific objectives.

4. What resources are required for a successful program?

In order to be effective, recognition and incentive programs should motivate employees to higher standards of performance, have intrinsic value, and offer peer recognition. In other words, the employee must be proud to work for and receive the award. The motivation is more significant if the form of recognition creates a story that the employee can tell their family, friends, and associates. Some of the most effective forms of recognition cost nothing at all. While years of service or incentive awards are often accompanied with a gift or monetary compensation, the fact is that compensation is not the primary reason people are unhappy with their work. People are hungry for opportunity to grow in their jobs. They crave advancement, both in position and stature, and in responsibility and opportunity. One of the most effective ways to boost employee morale is to provide an optimum working environment. A key ingredient in creating such an environment is appreciation. Research shows that a significant source of employee frustration results from not having received the recognition they want or feedback on how they are doing. Expressing appreciation as the organization moves towards

accomplishing goals should be given in a continual and consistent manner. All employees should be singled out from time to time, and not just the “stars” in the organization. People want to feel involved in their jobs and important to the success of the organization. Asking them to set their own goals and suggest better ways to do things can motivate employees. They will appreciate knowing they work for an organization with a clear sense of the future and are even more committed when they help define that future.

In summary, there is ample evidence available to indicate that the success of these programs is not dependent on a significantly-sized budget. The organization must be geared from the top down to value employees. Pay is obviously an important element, but so are communications across the organization, a commitment to training, flexibility, positive feedback and tangible recognition. In general, employees should feel valued and strongly connected to the organization.

An Administrative Directive to form an Awards Review Committee will be issued to Division Managers of Clearwater Fire and Rescue during the first Leadership meeting in December 1998. The intent of this directive is to recognize that the fire service of our community and the country is evolving. As we move into areas of service previously unheard of for firefighters, it is paramount that we recognize the need to support our personnel as we ask them to assume these new responsibilities. In addition to recognizing extraordinary effort and demonstrating our appreciation, the successful implementation of the program will enhance our communication with field personnel. This free exchange of information and ideas will be key to the ultimate success of our organization. (Appendix A)

DISCUSSION

There are several key factors that contribute to employee satisfaction in the work environment. Employees must feel that they are:

- treated fairly;
- valued and appreciated for their work;
- recognized for their work;
- paid a fair wage for their work; and
- doing work that is important.

The results of a recent study clearly indicate that work performance is a reflection of how employees feel about themselves and their work. Employees were asked to rank 10 items, in order of importance, that they wanted from their jobs. Their employers were then asked to guess how they thought their employees would rank the same 10 items. The results, set out below, were surprising.

TABLE 1**Employee/Employer Rankings on the Importance of Job-Related Issues**

Employees' Rank	Item	Employers' Rank
1	Interesting work	5
2	Appreciation and recognition	8
3	Feeling "in on things"	10
4	Job security	2
5	Good wages	1
6	Promotion/growth	3
7	Good working conditions	4
8	Personal loyalty	6
9	Tactful discipline	7
10	Sympathetic help with problems	9

(Niebrugge, 1992.)

Of interest to this author was that although there is no data to indicate the type of employment the survey covered, the employees ranked "interesting work" as what they want most in their jobs. This would seem to substantiate the findings of others that support a contention that certain personality types gravitate toward emergency services work and enjoy long, successful careers in a difficult field. Employers, for the most part, still seem to focus on wages as the most important component of employee satisfaction, although the survey places it about midway on the scale. "Economic incentives are becoming rights rather than rewards," observes Peter Drunker. Merit raises were introduced as rewards for exceptional performance. In no time at all they became a right. To deny a merit raise or to grant only a small one becomes punishment. The increasing demand for material rewards is rapidly destroying their usefulness as incentives and managerial tools. (Nelson, 1998)

Pay usually tends to become very important only when the employee feels his or her pay is

below standard for what similar workers earn elsewhere. If your pay is in line with expectations, chances are employee job satisfaction hinges more on “people” issues than on the fact that they may earn a few dollars more or less than their peers.

It has become obvious that managers today have fewer ways to shape employee behavior. To be effective, today’s managers must create supportive work environments that can influence, but not force, desired behaviors and outcomes. The role of today’s managers is to provide leadership and to take on an entirely new set of management practices (Nelson, 1998). “Pay” is not what it is all about. Employees need more than an agreed-upon wage to be productive and loyal. Every manager’s dream is to have employees who care as deeply for the success of the organization as they would if the organization belonged to them. While you may never get employees to care that much, you can build a sense that what’s good for the organization is good for them.

The results of this research project present significant implications to organizations of all types. Although research and common sense strongly suggest that happy, committed, employees work more productively and provide better service, organizations have difficulty relating this to success. Today’s emphasis on customer service, even for those that provide an emergency service, has created an absolute need for acknowledging the fact that happy employees lead to happy customers. Harvard professor Alfie Kohn, in his book, *The Case Against Incentives*, argues forcefully against using traditional recognition programs. He suggests that they can focus on the wrong agenda: winning instead of working better. Daniel Boyle, a consultant and author of many employee recognition

systems in use in such companies as Owen Corning, suggests you can improve productivity merely by supporting average, expected work performance. (Boyle, 1997)

The short-term result is improved morale among employees; the long-term result is better organizational performance in every dimension. "When an organization builds a reputation as a great place to work—one that satisfies the needs of its employees—the best people will come, they'll stay, and the organization will succeed," according to Karen Hessian, Senior Director of Employee Performance Solutions. (Gallup and Carlson, 1998)

RECOMMENDATIONS

With regard to question #1 and the accompanying findings, it is recommended that all organizations, regardless of their size, develop and implement programs that acknowledge the contributions of their employees. This recognition should extend beyond on-duty efforts and might also include acknowledging exceptional actions of citizens in the community served. While it has never been acceptable, there are still "hard-line " tactics in use by some managers as a tool to influence the behavior of employees. This is clearly archaic thinking which will ultimately be counterproductive to the entire organization. Nearly as damaging to an organization is a management team that may have the best of intentions but for various reasons never takes the time to create a program. This sends a strong message to the employees that the management just doesn't care. The effect on employees will be low morale and the accompanying symptoms, such as excessive sick time use and high turnover. The results for the organization are lackluster performance and poor customer service.

With regard to question #2 and the findings, the recommendation is for managers to go out into the organization and talk to their employees. The simplest, most obvious way to get information about how your employees feel is to just ask them. Find out if they're getting what they want out of the employment relationship or if there is some gripe about working conditions that you can correct. Find out what they want in the form of meaningful recognition. You'll find that these new lines of communication you've opened are the first steps you can take toward building commitment and involvement. By including employees in these and other decisions, you've given them a sense of ownership and control of their future.

With regard to question #3 and the findings, it is recommended that employers or organization managers take the time to study and learn the **current** fundamentals of employee and employer relationships. It is vital that organizations understand the factors that motivate today's employees. Salaries and merit raises are not incentives for exceptional work performance. An atmosphere of fear and intimidation will do nothing but create an adversarial relationship between employees and management. The resulting lack of communication will paralyze the organization. Employees who aren't happy will eventually result in customers who aren't happy. Organizations today are moving from being "rule driven" to customer service driven. What many employers fail to realize is that their employees are in fact internal customers who should be treated accordingly. The basic recipe for happy and successful employees in all types of organizations is:

- Share your vision for the future, along with the mission of the organization.

- Give some power to employees. This makes them stakeholders and encourages commitment and involvement.
- Encourage risk taking and create a culture that allows for a certain amount of failure. Never punish mistakes of the heart.
- Try to “over-communicate” with employees. This will help to identify barriers to success.
- Use reward systems that are meaningful.

With regard to question #4 and the findings, it is recommended that organizations consider employee recognition programs a requirement for doing business, no matter what type of business they are in. It should be clearly understood that recognition programs do not require significant expense. Money is not a significant motivator. A supervisor or manager who takes time from their busy schedule to give a simple “thank you” or a reward for a job well done is motivating. This is exceptionally important and can be particularly gratifying to an employee doing a behind-the-scenes job. How you present your reward and recognition is almost as important as what you recognize and maybe more important than the reward. Regardless of the resources at hand, recognition that is meaningful is given with sincerity and thoughtfulness. It must be treated as special, because that’s what it is. It should not be treated as some necessary evil. If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right. Recognizing an employee is not an end in and of itself, it’s a means to an end, making the employee feel valued and reinforcing desirable behavior.

Additional research is needed to evaluate whether specific types of programs might be more beneficial to employees engaged in emergency services. The body of available information on these programs, particularly in the public sector, is very limited. This additional research might also be expanded to include other employment classes such as nurses, emergency room physicians, and police officers, since they are exposed to many of the same influences in the workplace that Fire and EMS personnel are.

Additional research is also needed to determine if the negative effects of required change in an organization can be avoided. The Fire service is steeped in tradition and there is very little consideration given to managing the expectations of change with long-standing employees. The transition of change is uncomfortable for most people. Yet, with the advances in training and equipment coupled with any new requirements of the community, change is unavoidable. An understanding of the effective management of change as it applies to the organizational psyche and culture of employees will prove beneficial to all workplace managers.

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APPENDIX A

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE

CLEARWATER FIRE AND RESCUE Awards and Recognition Program

AUTHORITY:

The following is an administrative directive from the Office of the Fire Chief to amend the Standard Operating Guidelines of Clearwater Fire and Rescue, to include the addition of a formal Awards and Recognition Program.

PURPOSE:

To establish procedures for recognizing exemplary employee accomplishments and service to the public; or to citizens who perform acts of distinct heroism; or to those who provide an outstanding service to this Department or to the public safety of the community.

The intent of this administrative directive is to recognize that the fire service of this community and this country is evolving. As we move into areas of service previously unheard of for firefighters, it is paramount that we recognize the need to support our personnel as we ask them to assume these new responsibilities. In addition to recognizing extraordinary effort and demonstrating our appreciation, the successful implementation of the above program will enhance communication with field personnel. This free exchange of information and ideas will be key to the ultimate success of our organization.

POLICY:

As directed by the "Awards Selection Committee," the objective of the Awards Recognition Program is to encourage employees to contribute, individually or in groups, to improving the services to the citizens of the City of Clearwater; to develop and retain motivated employees; and to recognize and reward exemplary employee accomplishments and contributions which lead to improved community service.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Overall responsibility for direction and coordination of the department's employee recognition program will be with the Deputy Chief of Operations. Under his/her direction an Awards Selection Committee will be established and tasked with the following:

- Provide guidance and assistance as required to implement this directive.

- Develop and promote an Awards Recognition Program that recognizes and motivates personnel at all levels, enhances communication within the organization, and fulfills the mission of the Department.
- Develop recommendations for participation in the planning of annual award ceremonies such as banquets, family cookouts, etc.
- Develop award recommendations to allow for “immediate” recognition of quality customer service.
- Develop a program to serve as an “employee suggestion box,” to include acknowledgment of any suggestions that are implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE:

1/31/99	Awards Selection Committee members identified and first committee meeting held.
3/31/99	Any programs with significant budgetary impact identified.
3/31/99	“Immediate Recognition” awards identified and process for identifying eligible recipients drafted and submitted to the Office of the Fire Chief.
4/30/99	Submission of completed Employee Recognition Program draft to the Office of the Fire Chief.
5/31/99	Submission of completed Employee Suggestion Program draft to the Office of the Fire Chief.